

Ephesians 1:3-14

by Gordon C. Olson

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; He who did bless us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, even as He did choose us out for Himself in Him before the world's foundation, to be ourselves (continually) holy and without blemish before the face of Him in love, He who did appoint us beforehand unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the kindly intent (benevolence) of His will, unto glorious praise of His loving-kindness (grace) which He did freely bestow on us in Him who had become beloved, in whom we are having the redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of trespasses, according to the abundance of His loving-kindness which He did make to abound unto us in all wisdom and understanding having made known to us the hidden counsel of His will, according to His kindly intent which He did purpose in Him unto a dispensation of the fullness of the seasons, to bring together again for Himself the whole in the Christ, those upon the heavens and those upon the earth; in Him, in whom also we were made a heritage having been appointed beforehand according to a purpose of Him who is working the whole according to the counsel of His will, unto our being (continually) unto praise of His glory who have come to hope before in the Christ; in whom ye yourselves also having heard the word of the truth the glad tidings of your salvation, in whom also having believed ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto redemption of the possession, unto praise of His glory."

The whole paragraph constitutes a single sentence, and it appears that theme of the whole is contained in the first phrase-- a blessing pronounced upon the Father. He is thus to be blessed for various reasons. The second phrase begins with an aorist participle, as does the fifth phrase. This may be a clue that the second through the fourth phrases are to be read as a unit, as follows:

"He who did bless us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, even as He did choose us out for Himself in Him before the world's foundation, to be ourselves holy and without blemish before the face of Him in love".

The Father is to be blessed FIRST, because He "did bless us . . . in Christ". This He is said to have done "before the world's foundation", and to have done in or through Christ. The question arises as to whether the blessings spoken of are the original blessings bestowed on Adam before the fall, or the blessings of redemption in foreknowledge of the fall. It may be said that the phrase, "in Christ" limits the application to that of redemption, but this is not at all necessarily so. There are a series of passages which ascribe the creation and sustenance of man and all material existence to Jesus Christ, as follows: Jn. 1:3,10; I Cor.8:6; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2, 10; and Rev. 3:14. In Colossians we read, "in Him were all things created, . . . all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all, and in Him all things consist." Now these statements do not relate at all to redemption, but teach that man as God's creature was intended to be "in Christ" in all the phases of his existence. It may be said then in perfect harmony with

Scripture, that God did choose mankind of all His created material existences to the remarkable privilege of being "in Christ", dwelling holy and without blemish "before His face in love and holy pleasure of association." No wonder the Apostle exclaimed, "Blessed the God and Father", for devising such kind benevolence. This was done without certain knowledge that man would deny his birthright, and sin against his loving Creator, bringing about separation.

It must be remembered that non-foreknowledge of the fall is strongly supported by the revelation of Scripture, Gen. 6:5-7 for example, which is literally translated as follows: "And Jehovah saw that great (was) the wickedness of man on the earth and every purpose of the thoughts of his heart (was) only evil the whole day. And Jehovah regretted that He had made man on the earth, and He grieved unto His heart. And Jehovah said: I will wipe off man whom I have created from upon the face of the ground, from man unto beast, unto creeper, and unto fowl of the heavens; for I regret that I have made them." Beloved, when God had made such glorious and blessed plans for His creature man, and man had forsaken the great heart of God for sinful pleasure, and further, grew worse and worse, can we form any conception of the sorrow and grief that came upon the blessed Trinity when they "saw" such wickedness? And further, when God contemplated man's glorious endowments, created so that man might fellowship with and understand his Creator, now being used to devise means of sinful gratification, who shall measure God's sorrow, and also His mercy in not instantly terminating man's existence? How very natural and affecting are these remarkable revelations of the heart of God, and how very absurd and impossible of contemplation if God possessed absolute foreknowledge of all this when He "formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life."

The Father is to be blessed **SECONDLY** because "He did appoint us beforehand unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself, . . . which He did freely bestow on us in Him who had become beloved, in whom we are having the redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of trespasses, . . . to bring together again for Himself the whole in the Christ". In this series of apparently related expressions, there appears 5 aorist tenses, as follows: "did appoint beforehand", "did freely bestow", "did make to abound", "having made (or, did make) known", and "did purpose". A perfect tense is very suggestively applied to Christ and His work. An aorist infinitive, "to bring together again", is used to describe the instantaneous future culmination of the saved (tense basically having no time element in an infinitive, but relating to kind of action). But in speaking of the application of the plan of salvation, the all important present tense, "we are having the redemption", signifying present continuous action, is used. This redemption consists in "the forgiveness of trespasses", which of course could only occur in time after they had been committed.

The 5 aorist tenses and particularly the expression, "He who did appoint us beforehand unto adoption as sons", may in all fairness to the text be interpreted to relate to God's general plan of redemption wherein He appointed beforehand to adopt sinners back into sonship by means of the sacrificial death of Christ. That the method of salvation is what is appointed, rather than individuals being appointed, is further supported by the

statement, "we are having redemption", which appears to be an inserted thought in the series of expressions on the plan and mercy of salvation.

The THIRD section is a continuation of the thought of the second. We are not only redeemed as for ourselves, but have become "a heritage" of God. The pronoun "we" most likely refers collectively to those who had entered upon redemption. They have "been appointed beforehand" unto being to the "praise of His glory". Very important is the next designation of the "we", "who have come to hope before in Christ", "to hope before" being a perfect tense participle of proelpvzw. The whole plan of redemption is being worked out "according to the counsel of His will". Here then in the word, "appointed beforehand" (proorivzw), we may have a parallel thought to that of Rom. 8:29, where the same word in the aorist tense occurs. It was agreed there that it referred to those who had been appointed, one by one, to the blessings of salvation, up to the time of Paul's writing that epistle. If so here, foreknowledge would not be involved, as they were so appointed upon their repentance to be continually to the praise of His glory.

On the other hand, this third section might be a continuation of the same general plan of salvation of the other sections, and not have any specific reference. This is strengthened by the very definite turn to specific application in the next phrase, "in whom ye yourselves also". The thought would then be, that those who would ever be saved through the atonement and grace of God, would be by appointment God's special heritage "unto praise of His glory". The word, "appointed beforehand", then would not pertain to any personal identity, but to the redeemed viewed as a group, such as was done in the preceding context, foreknowledge not being therefore involved.

THE CONCLUDING STATEMENT very decidedly applies to the saints who would read Paul's epistle, "in whom ye yourselves". This adds force to the suggestion, that previously Paul had not addressed any particular group of saints but was stating some general and remarkably blessed truths concerning God and the plan of salvation.

This page may be copied and distributed freely as long as it is not altered.